

# PURPLE ENDS PREMATUREITY

Prematurity Awareness Month®

High School Volunteers Guide

march  of dimes  
teamyouth®

### Turn your school PURPLE to end prematurity!

In the United States, 1 in 9 babies is born too soon, and many who survive face serious health problems. We need **your** help to spread awareness of this costly and serious problem!

Celebrate World Prematurity Day on November 17 and throughout the entire month of November by turning your school PURPLE to end prematurity! Check out our step-by-step guide and get ready to make an impact! Go the extra mile by doing multiple events and/or combined events to make one large prematurity awareness extravaganza!

Employers pay \$12 billion annually in excess health care costs for premature babies, and our country spends \$26 billion in total.

#### How to turn your school PURPLE — sample events:

- Light your school in PURPLE
- Rock out in PURPLE — Host a PURPLE dance
- Dress your school in PURPLE

Get creative! Host a PURPLE event of your choice that helps raise awareness and funds for the March of Dimes.

Be sure to register your school and event with the March of Dimes online at [marchofdimes.org/youth](http://marchofdimes.org/youth) to receive updates and resources to help make your event even more successful!



#### Before you begin:

- Rally your classmates: Gather a group of dedicated volunteers by educating your classmates and peers about the impact of premature birth and the importance of raising awareness. Depending on the event, you may need some help to make your event a success. Check out our [speaking points \(pg. 9\)](#) for ideas on what to say.
- Utilizing our [sample letter and email \(pg. 7\)](#), set up a meeting with your administration to discuss the importance of World Prematurity Day, and explain that you want to host a specific event to raise awareness.
- Check out our [spread the word page \(pg. 8\)](#) for ways to talk about World Prematurity Day on social media. Tell everyone why you feel PURPLE!

#### Need more help?

- Contact [teamyouth@marchofdimes.com](mailto:teamyouth@marchofdimes.com)
- Be sure to follow us on Facebook - #MarchofDimesYouth — and on Twitter - @teamyouth



## Light your school in PURPLE!

Celebrate Prematurity Awareness Month® throughout November and World Prematurity Day on November 17 by lighting up your school in purple, the March of Dimes color! Remember to gather your peers and get your school on board.

**1. Check the lighting options:** With your principal's approval, contact building maintenance personnel who will know how to change the lighting. Remember to ask about both exterior and interior lights (such as elevators, lobbies or other high-traffic areas inside your school).

**2. Gather the equipment:** Purple light bulbs are typically available in hardware stores, and cost varies based on type. Personnel may have suggestions where to purchase the supplies or have them donated. An alternative to changing bulbs is covering existing ones with approved light filters — your school theater or drama club may have some you can borrow.



*Unable to light the building or looking for a way to complement your lighting?*  
Consider decorating your school in purple (balloons, posters, balloon arch, banners, etc.).

**3. Light your school in PURPLE to end prematurity:**

Here are a few suggestions for hosting an unforgettable purple lighting ceremony. Remember to promote your lighting throughout school (post flyers, host an information booth, and publicize within your school newspaper and website).

- Find an emcee to kick off the ceremony and “turn on the lights.” This could be a local leader at school, like your class president, homecoming queen or king, principal or even your mascot!
- Provide candles or flashlights to attendees, instructing every 9th person to turn their light off or on at a specific time.
- Provide information about the serious and costly effects of premature birth. Visit [marchofdimes.org/prematurity](http://marchofdimes.org/prematurity)
- Invite someone with a connection to the March of Dimes mission to share his or her story.
- Share one of the many stories available at [youtube.com/marchofdimes](http://youtube.com/marchofdimes).

## Make a bigger impact

- Invite a local band/DJ to perform and turn the lighting ceremony into a celebration.
- Secure food donations from local restaurants or other sources.
- Pass around purple buckets to collect donations to help fund research into the reasons why so many babies are born too soon. Submit donations to your local March of Dimes office.

## Rock out in PURPLE to end prematurity — Host a PURPLE dance!

Hosting a purple dance is a great way to raise awareness and funds to help end prematurity, all while rocking out in purple, the March of Dimes color! Remember to gather your peers and get your school on board.



1. **Assign roles and finalize logistics:** At least 1 month prior to the event, host a brainstorming session to discuss fun and interesting ways to make your dance a fun event for all! Be sure to meet as a group (perhaps weekly) to discuss and finalize logistics (including marketing, event setup/clean up and entertainment (live band, DJ, etc.).

*Need more help?* Make it a community event and invite other clubs and organizations to assist. You will have extra hands to help and more people to raise awareness.

*Is a dance already planned in November?* Offer to join forces and host one large dance that incorporates entertainment and raising awareness.

2. **Rock out in PURPLE to end prematurity!**

Here are a few suggestions for hosting an unforgettable purple dance.

- Host a moment of silence for the 15 million babies born too soon each year and the 1 million who do not survive.
- Post 1 in 9 markings throughout the venue — symbolizing that 1 in 9 babies is born too soon each year in the United States. Include March of Dimes information along with the marking.
- Provide information about the serious and costly effects of premature birth. Visit [marchofdimes.org/prematurity](http://marchofdimes.org/prematurity)
- Invite someone with a connection to the March of Dimes mission to share his or her story.
- Share one of the many stories available at [youtube.com/marchofdimes](http://youtube.com/marchofdimes).



## Make a bigger impact

- Charge an entry fee with the proceeds to be donated to the March of Dimes to help find the reasons why so many babies are born too soon.
- Secure food donations from local restaurants or other sources.
- Reach out to local businesses for incentives and prizes.
- Host a contest to see who can wear the most purple and crown a winner by the end of the night.

## Dress your school in PURPLE to end prematurity!

Raise awareness and funds to help end prematurity, all dressed in purple, the March of Dimes color! Remember to gather your peers and get your school on board.

## Dress your school in PURPLE!

Here are a few suggestions for hosting and promoting a successful Dress Your School in Purple day or days.

- Post purple markings (balloon, ribbon, poster, etc.) on every 9th locker, classroom door, parking space and/or bicycle stands. Include March of Dimes information along with the marking.
- On World Prematurity Day, host a school-wide moment of silence for 15 seconds in honor of the 15 million babies born too soon worldwide each year.
- Make a presentation about premature birth to your class, grade or entire school and/or invite someone with a connection to the March of Dimes mission to share his or her story.
- Post facts about premature birth throughout school — bulletin boards, classrooms, lockers, etc. Visit [marchofdimes.org/prematurity](http://marchofdimes.org/prematurity) for helpful information.
- Include a fact about premature birth on morning announcements and/or in the school newspaper every day leading up to the event and/or throughout November.

## Make a bigger impact

- Create a contest to see who can wear the most purple — from head to toe! Think socks, shoes, shirts, accessories, even hair color. If you can wear it, make it purple!
- Collect money to help fund research into the reasons why so many babies are born too soon. Sell purple awareness bands/ribbons. Design and sell purple T-shirts with information about premature birth (work with local businesses to have the shirts donated). Submit donations to your local March of Dimes office.



**Get Creative — Host a PURPLE Event!**

Hosting a purple event at school is a great way to use your creativity to raise awareness and funds to help end prematurity! Remember to gather your peers and get your school on board.

- 1. Assign roles and finalize logistics:** At least a month before your event, brainstorm as a group to discuss fun and interesting ideas to engage your classmates and make your event unforgettable. Be sure to meet as a group (perhaps weekly) to discuss and finalize logistics (including marketing, event setup/clean up and entertainment (live band, DJ, etc.).

*Need more help?* Make it a community event and invite other clubs/organizations to assist. You will have extra hands to help and more people to raise awareness!

- 2. Host your PURPLE event!** Here are a few suggestions for hosting an unforgettable purple event. Remember to promote the event throughout school leading up to the day (post flyers, host an information booth outside the cafeteria, and publicize within your school newspaper and website).
  - Post 1 in 9 markings throughout the event (such as every ninth balloon is white while the rest are purple) — symbolizing that 1 in 9 babies is born too early each year in the United States. Include March of Dimes information along with the marking.
  - Find an emcee to kick off the event. This could be a local leader at school or in the community, such as your class president, homecoming queen or king, principal or even your mascot!
  - Provide information about the serious and costly effects of premature birth. Visit [marchofdimes.org/prematurity](http://marchofdimes.org/prematurity).
  - Invite someone with a connection to the March of Dimes mission to share his or her story.
  - Share one of the many stories available at [youtube.com/marchofdimes](http://youtube.com/marchofdimes).

**To make a bigger impact**

- Charge an entry fee with the proceeds to be donated to the March of Dimes to help fund research into the reasons why so many babies are born too soon.
- Secure food donations from local restaurants or other sources. Reach out to local businesses for incentives and prizes.
- Invite a local band/DJ to perform.
- Invite your school band, music club or even sketch comedy club to be the entertainment.



Sample letter and email to school administrators

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

This November, the (MARCH OF DIMES VOLUNTEER GROUP) is celebrating Prematurity Awareness Month®. We are joining the March of Dimes by going PURPLE to help end prematurity and to recognize the 15 million babies worldwide who are born too soon every year!

In honor of Prematurity Awareness Month, we will be hosting a PURPLE (EVENT NAME). (EVENT) will be held on (DATE) at (LOCATION) at (TIME). AT (EVENT), guests will (DESCRIBE EVENT). (SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION) can support our efforts by (INCLUDE SHORT DESCRIPTION OF REQUEST).

We hope you and the school will support our Prematurity Awareness Month activities. I would love to meet with you to share more information about the (EVENT) and Prematurity Awareness Month at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for working to end prematurity!

(Name of volunteer attending the school to which this letter is being sent)

cc: (Superintendent of Schools, March of Dimes local office)



## Spread the word

Post these Facebook statuses, Tweets, and Instagrams to raise awareness to end prematurity. Don't forget to hashtag #worldprematurityday #endsprematurity.

### Facebook

Add **"Feeling PURPLE"** at the bottom of your status!

- November is Prematurity Awareness Month®. Help the March of Dimes end prematurity. UR the FUTURE. [facebook.com/marchofdimes](https://www.facebook.com/marchofdimes) #worldprematurityday #endsprematurity
- URGENT: More than a million babies worldwide do not SURVIVE because they were born too soon. UR SURVIVAL. #worldprematurityday #endsprematurity
- How important are your eyes? Your lungs? Your brain? Babies need 39 weeks to develop them! Help end prematurity! #worldprematurityday #endsprematurity
- Even babies born just a couple weeks early are at risk for lifelong disabilities such as cerebral palsy, lung problems, and vision and hearing loss. UR able to change the future for millions of babies because #worldprematurityday #endsprematurity.

### Twitter

Post these tweets throughout November to encourage your followers to help end premature births. Get creative and come up with your own tweets!

- November 17 is World Prematurity Day. What will U do? #worldprematurityday #endsprematurity
- 1 in 9 U.S. babies is born too soon every year! How will U spread the word? #worldprematurityday #endsprematurity
- Every year, 1 million babies worldwide die before their 1st bday because they were born early, but UR able to make a difference. #worldprematurityday #endsprematurity
- 15 million babies are born too soon around the world every year. #worldprematurityday #endsprematurity
- Premature babies need UR help! UR the FUTURE. #worldprematurityday #endsprematurity
- Were U born prematurely? Share UR story in honor of Prematurity Awareness Month! #worldprematurityday #endsprematurity

### Instagram

Try out these instas during Prematurity Awareness Month to continue spreading the word.

- Post a picture of yourself wearing all purple. In your caption, explain that November is Prematurity Awareness Month and why you feel PURPLE. Tag your friends, asking them to do the same!
- Every Thursday in November, post a #TBT of yourself when you were a baby! In your caption, explain that November is Prematurity Awareness Month and why you feel PURPLE. Encourage your followers to do the same.





## Speaking points

What do you say when talking about the March of Dimes and Prematurity Awareness Month®? Check out these speaking points. Use them as Facebook status updates and tweets.

- November is Prematurity Awareness Month, when the March of Dimes focuses everyone’s attention on the impact premature birth has on babies and families.
- November 17 is World Prematurity Day, when we ask people to spread the word about the serious problem of premature birth. Visit [facebook.com/marchofdimes](https://facebook.com/marchofdimes) and [facebook.com/worldprematurityday](https://facebook.com/worldprematurityday) to find out how you can help.
- Every year, 15 million babies are born prematurely worldwide. More than a million of them die before their first birthday.
- In the United States, almost half a million babies are born too soon each year — that’s 1 in 9. The premature birth rate in our country is higher than that in many other developed nations.
- In November, the March of Dimes releases its seventh annual report card that scores the nation and each state on its rate of premature birth.
- Premature birth is the # 1 cause of death during the first month of life. Even babies born just a few weeks too soon can face serious health challenges and are at risk for lifelong disabilities, such as cerebral palsy, lung problems, and vision and hearing loss.
- Premature birth means a baby is born too early. Babies aren’t fully developed until at least 39 weeks of pregnancy. Important development of their brains, lungs and eyes occurs in the last few weeks of pregnancy.
- Most premature babies are born between 34 and 37 weeks of pregnancy; this is called late preterm birth. If a pregnancy is healthy, it’s best to let labor begin on its own instead of scheduling a delivery. Babies born after 39 weeks have fewer health problems than babies born early.
- Mom’s health is the best indicator of her baby’s health. Early and regular prenatal care is very important to monitor mom and baby to identify problems before they become serious. Every mom-to-be should know the signs of preterm labor and what to do if they occur.

